

Why I'm Spiritually Dry, Part 6 - Romans 14:19-21 – June 9th, 2013

- Today's teaching will be part six of a series I've titled; "Why I'm Spiritually Dry."
- Before we jump into this morning's text, we'll briefly review the first six causes of spiritual dryness and barrenness in the life of a believer.

1. Legalism (Verses 1-2)

2. Judgmentalism (Verses 3-4)

3. Denominationalism (Verses 5-9)

4. Phariseeism (Verses 10-12)

5. Liberalism (Verses 13-14)

6. Narcissism (Verses 15-18)

7. Individualism (Verses 19-21)

(19) Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. (20) Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. (21) It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall.

- v19 Paul exhorts us by saying that we're to make every effort to do what leads to peace and to the mutual edification of the body of Christ.
- v20 He says don't destroy the work of God for the sake of food, as it's all clean, but it's wrong to eat anything that causes others to stumble.
- v21 He then takes it a step further saying it is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall.

- Before we roll up our arm sleeves and work through this, I'd be grossly remiss not to first define individualism in the context of the passage.

Miriam Webster's definition of individualism is a doctrine that the interests of the individual are, or ought to be, ethically paramount; also: conduct guided by such a doctrine.

- Now that we know what individualism is, let's turn a corner and look at why it is that this doctrine of paramount self-interest is so dangerous.
- First, one given over to individualism will have the propensity to destroy the work of God for the sake of food by causing others to stumble.
- Furthermore, my individualism and freedom to eat meat drink wine or do anything else I want can cause others to not only stumble, but fall.

- Secondly, in my individualism I will have little, or no, regard for the mutual edification of others, such that it's the antithesis of mutualism.
- By that I mean individualism is the opposite of mutualism, and as such I'll make no effort to do that, which will lead to peace as Paul writes.
- Mutual edification leads to peace, whereas conversely, individual edification leads to conflict. Consider what James says in James 3:14-18.

James 3:14-18 NIV But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. (15) Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. (16) For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. (17) But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. (18) Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.

- In a sense, James ever so brilliantly contrasts contemptible individualism, with peaceable mutualism, and the harvest reaped from both.
- By way of contrast let's go to Miriam Webster's Dictionary for a definition of mutualism so as to better understand the point of the passage.

Miriam Webster's defines Mutualism as the doctrine, or practice, of mutual dependence, as the condition of individual and social welfare.

- I believe that God, by His divine design, desires a mutual dependency within the body of Christ, in so much as we would need one another.
- The reason is that Paul says as much, in his description of this mutual dependency as members of the body of Christ needing each other.

1 Corinthians 12:14-26 NIV (14) Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. (15) If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. (16) And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. (17) If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? (18) But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. (19) If they were all one part, where would the body be? (20) As it is, there are many parts, but one body. (21) The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" (22) On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, (23) and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, (24) while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, (25) so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. (26) If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

- I also believe that the enemy will fuel this notion of our individualism in order to isolate us, that he might then deceive us, then destroy us.

Ephesians 6:13-17 NKJV Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. (14) Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, (15) and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; (16) above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. (17) And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;

- Here's the bottom line, if my Christian life is marked by individualism under the banner of paramount self-interest, it's just a matter of time.
- In no time, I will dry up, instead of living it up, this because I have isolated and insulated myself from other members in the body of Christ.
- Could it be, this is the reason many self appointed "Lone Christians," are not only drying up, but also falling away in their walk with Christ?